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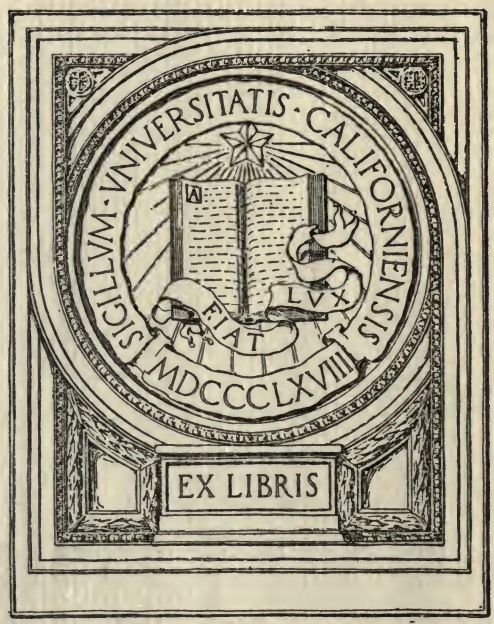
What I Believe

and

Why I Believe It

BY

REYNOLD E. BLIGHT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Reynold C. Blight

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AND

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REYNOLD E. BLIGHT

MINISTER, THE LOS ANGELES FELLOWSHIP

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FOREWORD

The following chapters contain the substance of a series of addresses in Blanchard Hall, Los Angeles, California, on "What I Believe and Why I Believe It," and are published at the urgent request of many who heard them delivered and desired to retain the talks in permanent form.

The purpose of the addresses was to discuss some of the problems of personal life and belief in a simple, popular, practical and constructive way. The usual religious phraseology was avoided so far as possible and the effort was made to speak the highest religious experiences in the language of the street and home.

No attempt was made to formulate doctrines. Spiritual truth is apprehended not by elaborating theologies but in living.

At the same time due respect was paid to the religious convictions of all men. There are great fundamental truths that all devout men, of whatever race or creed, believe in, and these are the truths that are sought and emphasized. Stick to the fundamentals and you will not quarrel with anyone.

There was no desire to preach a new gospel,

declare a new philosophy, or propagate new theories. In fact, the purpose of the addresses was not so much to inform the minds of the hearers as to clarify their ideals, quicken their moral life and inspire their spiritual aspirations.

One word of explanation concerning the speaker may be permitted. He is not a minister in a professional sense. As a certified public accountant he has a part in the busy world of affairs and steps to his Sunday platform, not from study and ministerial conference, but from counting room and business office. He knows at first hand the temptations, doubts, discouragements and weaknesses of the man in the street and his addresses are wrought out in the hot fires of commercial struggle and business rivalries. This fact may account for his slight regard for speculation and theology, and his emphasis upon the practical phases of religious life and belief.

The Los Angeles Fellowship, under whose auspices the addresses were given, is an association, so its constitution declares, for the purpose of encouraging trustful and unselfish living. And this is the only creed to which its members are asked to subscribe.

RELIGION

There is possible a statement of religion that makes all skepticism absurd, a statement of religion at once vital, practical, inspiring, satisfying both mind and soul.

Such a statement of religion must be self-evident. A doctrine that is established only by subtle argument and the straining of logic is by that necessity discredited. A dogma that must be defended with bitterness and anger is manifestly false. The creeds that divide mankind into warring armies are by that fact impeached. True religion should be one with the growing corn and the law of gravitation. It should be as axiomatic as the sunshine and compel the hearts and minds of men as irresistibly as the dawn.

The appeal of religion must be made to the reason as well as to the emotions. Why should we be called upon to do violence to our common sense and be compelled to give profession to dogmas which our own best knowledge declares to be false? Why can we not worship God and yet retain our intellectual self-respect? A real religion will bring us intellectual peace as well as spiritual illumination and serenity.

The lofty skyscrapers of New York, towering thirty and forty stories into the air, stand secure because their foundations rest upon the rocky backbone of the world. There are fundamental truths common to all religions, taught by every great teacher from Krishna and Christ to Emerson, that need but to be stated to win universal acceptance. Upon these profound yet simple principles all true religious experience must rest finally.

Men have fought bloody battles over doctrines, interpretations of scripture and ecclesiastical rituals. The thumbscrew and the rack, dungeons and the stake, have been invoked to establish a dogma. The propaganda of the creeds has filled the earth with slaughter and smeared with blood the pages of history. Yet no one ever went to war over the twenty-third Psalm or sprang at his brother's throat in defense of Paul's great hymn of love, the thirteenth chapter first Corinthians. The craziest religionist in the hour of his wildest delirium never dreamed of trying to demonstrate by torture the principles of the sermon on the mount, or thought to enforce the golden rule by the police power of the state. Why? Because doctrines, creeds and formulas are the aber-glaube about which men differ, argue and fight. The divine words of divine men convince by reason of their inherent reasonable-

ness; they convict the mind and melt the heart. They are elemental, fundamental, essential.

These great truths are not discovered by argument; they are spiritually discerned. They are not known by the dialetics of the schoolmen, but are wrought out in the fires of every day experience. They can never be embodied in creeds, they must be apprehended by the deep intuitions of the soul, confirmed by reason and made real in life.

Religion is not primarily a matter of logic and philosophy. It is a matter of life. The twentieth century will prove itself the most religious age in history because it is pre-eminently practical. It cares little for speculation and theory, be the syllogism never so subtle and the casuistry never so clever. It demands that religion and religious belief shall be tested in the same way that scientific theories and inventions are tried,—in the busy, commonplace, workaday world. It rudely interrupts the dignified preacher-essayist in his velvet-covered pulpit with the challenge, "How much is your religion worth measured in terms of life?" And although the rough interruption jars the stained-glass windows, interferes with the offertory, and sometimes sends the frightened congregation hurrying from the church, leaving the preacher to dream and drone to empty pews, the challenge is fully justified.

Says the twentieth century:

Your doctrines are pernicious if they make men hard, intolerant and cruel.

Your dogmas are vicious if they cloud the faces of gentle women and fill with fear the hearts of little children.

Your creeds do the devil's work if they fetter the mind and weigh down the wings of the human spirit.

Your beliefs must go to the scrap heap if they do not harmonize with God's truth as revealed in star, and bird, and flower, and if they contradict the mighty facts of life and love writ large on the pages of the rocks, each page the story of a thousand years.

Your religion is unworthy unless it is just as usable in the home, in the office, at the workbench and on the street as in the prayer-meeting; unless it makes a man strong, clean, noble, sympathetic, helpful in all relations of life.

The frank agnostic who loves his fellow-man is more certainly religious than the most devout professor of religion who is mean, selfish and dishonest.

Your religion must be big enough to cover the hours of temptation, failure, bereavement and discouragement, otherwise it is a delusion.

If your religion is worth while it will bring life more abundant, adding to your joy, bring-

ing courage, hope, strength, and spiritual illumination, inspiring to noble endeavor and moral achievement, and filling you with a divine enthusiasm to help your fellows. If your religious experience answers to this test the theology you hold and your church affiliations are of no importance. Your life is founded on a rock. No matter how widely you differ from your neighbors in matters of doctrine, it will be found that you all agree in your belief in and loyalty to the self-evident moral principles proclaimed by all the great souls of the race.

The prophet was right when he declared "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God."

The apostle was right when he said "pure religion and undefiled is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

The Master himself spoke the greatest word of all, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind, soul, and strength and thy neighbor as thyself. This is the law and the prophets."

GOD

"The soul was made for God and cannot rest until it finds rest in him," declared Augustine.

But the present generation has lost consciousness of the presence of God. The scientific knowledge of this latter day has so changed our understanding of the universe that the anthropomorphic conception of God, held by our fathers, is no longer tenable. We have not yet adjusted our religious ideas to our new knowledge. Many of us feel as did the ignorant monk whose companions had shown him the grotesqueness of his thought of God as a magnified man, who when he sought to pray, burst into tears and cried, "You have taken away my God." We find ourselves orphaned, bereft, bewildered and alone. We lift the cry of Job, "O that I knew where I might find him."

We have hypnotized ourselves with such words as science, inexorable law, evolution, the unknowable God, cause and effect, the survival of the fittest and other catch-words of modern knowledge until we have frozen all the poetry in our minds, quenched the sym-

pathy in our hearts and killed the faith in our souls.

The truth is, God is speaking to men today with greater clearness and force than at any other time in the world's history. The newer knowledge has rent the veil and revealed the holy of holies. In the light of modern science the devout soul sees every bush aflame with the Divine Presence and God himself shines forth from every blade of grass and utters himself in music in the song of birds. Every event, every experience proclaims the presence of Deity.

Our fathers lived in a world of mystery, wonder and miracle. We look out upon a world much more wonderful, but with less mystery and no miracle. Science has demonstrated two mightily significant facts, law and progress. Upon these fundamental truths all scientists agree.

Under the control of soft-binding but immutable law the mighty planet plunges through space, the delicate orchid shudders in the shade, the gnat dances in the summer twilight and the earthquake shakes cities into ruin. The universe is a stupendous clock going so accurately that the return of a comet or the coming of an eclipse may be foretold to an hour. There is no chance, whim or caprice discernible anywhere.

Science has discovered something besides law and that is progress, evolution. From the simple to the complex, from the lower to the higher, from instinct to reason, from unconsciousness to consciousness, from the beast to the Christ, life has unfolded, by gradual but certain development.

"Every clod feels a stir of might,
An instinct within it that reaches and towers,
And, groping blindly above it for light,
Climbs to a soul in grass and flowers."

Or as Emerson has well put it:

"Striving to be man, the worm
Mounts through all the spires of form."

In view of these scientifically demonstrated truths are we not justified in going one step farther and declaring that this universe demonstrates purpose, and purpose intelligence?

In fact, the greatest scientists not only admit it but proclaim it.

Says Herbert Spencer, "One truth must ever grow clearer and clearer, the truth that there is an Inscrutable Existence manifested everywhere."

Alfred Russel Wallace in a recent magazine article declared, "The great facts of nature, viewed in their entirety, compel us to recognize a power and a purpose in the vast world

of life, that the organic forces and laws are its manifestations, and that without this conception of purpose and foreseen result the whole cosmic process becomes unmeaning and unintelligible."

Romanes has also said, "Tap nature anywhere and it seems to flow with purpose."

Thus by scientific paths we get pretty close to a demonstration of Pope's poetic conception that:

"All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
Whose body nature is and God the soul."

God the soul! Instantly we are back by that wellside in Samaria listening to that remarkable conversation between Jesus and the woman, and we hear again those marvelous words of insight,—the highest, clearest, most comprehensive definition of God even given,—"God is spirit."

The wonderful, various, complex, developing universe is the material manifestation of God. The crowded, intricate, mysterious energy filling earth, sea and sky, and weaving a changeful web of life and death in the roaring loom of time is the breathing forth of God. The subtle and vital laws, softer than gossamer, stronger than steel cables, that bind Orion and the violet are the methods of God. This evolving purpose is the will of God. He pervades and transcends this universe we see and know.

There is grave danger that in our philosophizing our idea of God may become so vague, so attenuated, that we lose consciousness of our vital relationship to him. In our protest against the crude, outgrown ideas of God there is a perilous tendency to swing to the other extreme and lose our grasp on Reality in a general diffusiveness. Can a man enter into conscious, vital relationship with him? That is the important question.

Consciousness in man is the highest product of evolution. The hours that I recognize as my best must be my nearest approach to this animating principle of the universe. Then it follows that I most nearly touch God and know him in the best I can think, or dream, or aspire to.

What is the best I can think, dream, or aspire to? Goodness, mercy, truth, self-sacrifice, justice, purity, peace, beauty, love, righteousness!

These are not mere abstractions, they are qualities of character, the most real things in human life, or within human ken.

I recognize them as supremely excellent.

I can understand these qualities only as they exist in me.

I know them as my best self. I live most supremely and satisfactorily when I let these qualities dominate my thought, control my desires and determine my actions.

As I increasingly consecrate myself to show forth these qualities I become conscious that I do not create them, I simply allow them to flow through me. They are energy, power, virtue.

I know them as manifestations of that Divine Power that in nature makes for order, purpose, development, and in me makes for righteousness.

Thus by living, I come to know that I am the offspring of that Power, that I hold an instant relationship to him, that I have no life apart from him, that in fact, in him I live and move and have my being.

I come at length to understand what Jesus meant when he said, "My Father," and "I and my Father are one." I come into an experience that can not be defined or accurately described. It is peace and joy, illumination and inspiration. It can be known only by experience; an experience wherein I know God.

In dismay you ask, Do you believe in a personal God? Yes, most assuredly, just as certainly as I believe he is in star and rose and the purple lights of the mountain. But he as far transcends personality as he transcends star and rose. He includes all. Don't distress yourself about the personality of God. Says Emerson, "when the devout motions of the soul come, yield to them heart and life, though they

should clothe God with shape and color." Yield and you shall be led on to the deeper truth, the clearer apprehension.

I am not anxious that you should profess "I believe in God." I desire that you should say, in sincerity and earnestness, in the words of a great scientist, "I believe in goodness and will so order my life," because this consecration is the first step on the path that leads to the richest, sweetest, only truly satisfying experience possible to man,—fellowship with God.

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

When a man earnestly and devoutly resolves to believe in goodness and to so order his life he rises to live a new life. He assumes new standards by which to judge his actions, new ideals by which to test his motives, a new purpose by which to direct his life.

He soon comes to know that he is a spiritual man living in a spiritual universe. This great truth may not be fully disclosed at once. Its perception may be a slow and gradual process, but it surely reveals itself. Just as a child merging into boyhood becomes self-conscious, so the man passing into this new life dominated by goodness becomes spiritually conscious, or enters into the experience of Self-realization.

The former life of eating and drinking, of easy comforts, commonplace habits, sensual gratifications, routine work; of narrowness, prejudice, sickness, sin; of selfishness and triviality; is only a dream life, unreal and unworthy. Even the intellectual attainments are by comparison of minor worth. Under the illumination of the goodness to which he has consecrated himself he learns that he is not merely

a body to be fed, clothed and indulged, that he is not merely a mind to be educated and developed, he discovers that he is spirit, that in a real though subtle way he and the goodness are one.

At first dimly perceived, the identification becomes gradually more apparent. The deepest joy of his life comes as he discovers that as he yields himself to live according to these noble and unselfish impulses he becomes more and more conscious of this inner life, that expresses itself through him in virtue, beauty and blessing. He becomes conscious of the divinity of his being.

The effect of this increasing realization is revolutionary. He becomes a new creature. Old things do indeed pass away, all things become new. Old ambitions, habits, ideals, hopes, dreams, all expressed in terms of selfishness and limitation, give place to aspirations, purposes, ideals, that are unselfish, that seek universal ends, that make him the clear channel for the manifestation of the divine life within.

Goodness, mercy, sympathy, tolerance, beauty, sincerity, love, pour themselves a resistless tide of energy through his thoughts, looks, words, and deeds, vitalizing his deepest being, and becoming a moral dynamic as it touches other lives. If he be an orator his speech vibrates with compelling power. If he

be a writer his pen flashes with an electric spark. If he be a politician his policies take on a statesmanlike sweep. If he be a teacher his instruction pulsates with a quickening life that is more effective than the teaching of his textbooks. If he be a merchant his cheapest clerk and his most distant customer feels the vibration of his awakened soul. If his work be common and routine, it takes on a deep significance even though it be understood only by his own soul. This is the spiritual life. It is spiritual truth realized in everyday experience.

The spiritual life is not simply meditation, prayer and philanthropy. It is a spirit that expresses itself most fully in the commonplace duties of the daily work, teaching the children, keeping books, running street cars, sweeping the streets, selling goods, washing dishes, entertaining friends, working at a bench.

The spiritual life is not a life of stress and strain, conflicts with evil, battles with temptation, struggles with bad habits. It is rather a life of relaxation. The new affections drive out the old loves. The more splendid ideals destroy the old ambitions. The new power possesses the soul and leaves no room for evil thoughts and desires that formerly plagued him.

The spiritual life is not a smug Phariseeism, a thanking of God that he is not as other men, a holier than thou attitude. Self-righteousness

is repugnant to the gentle sincerity and child-like simplicity that characterizes the truly spiritual man.

Nor is the spiritual life an austere Puritanism. The glorious qualities of goodness enrich life in a thousand ways. The splendor and sparkling gaiety of nature reflect the glory of the illumined soul, a glory that must shine in acts and words of love and tenderness. Austerity, gloom and bigotry are the farthest removed from a truly spiritual life.

While thus the revolution is being accomplished within, a new world is being created without, rather he views the universe through enlightened eyes. The universe that reveals itself to the scientist as orderly, reasonable, purposeful, discloses itself to the awakened spirit as the creation of an All-wise, All-powerful, All-good Power. To the scientist, there is no vacuum, no miracle or caprice, no break in the eternal laws. To the spiritual man there is no evil, no discord, anywhere. His eye perceives the all pervading beauty. His ear is attuned to the universal music. He knows that:

"In the mud and scum of things
There alway, alway something sings."

The material world loses its substantiality in the realization of spirit, and the testimony of the senses is corrected by the apprehension of spiritual truth. The order of the world is

assurance that all the universe with triumphant march moves toward a "far-off, divine event." He sets himself therefore to co-operate with that immanent Power, intelligently and consistently. He subordinates self to the universal purpose. Finding that the goodness within responds to the goodness found without, and learning thereby that the purpose of his life and the world-life is to fully express that interior goodness, he surrenders himself with renewed consecration to express that goodness in every moment of life. Thus he learns to co-operate with the evolutionary purpose. He becomes a creator.

The result in his life is two-fold.

He is emancipated from the thralldom of sense, he is freed from the slavery of sin, fear, ignorance and sickness. He becomes a master of life. The world becomes plastic to his touch. The limitations that fretted him become wings to lift him heavenward. The mesmerism of the material world falls from him like a bad dream and he awakens to the consciousness of his own divinity and spiritual power. He has learned the open sesame that opens the treasure house of God. He has been given the word of the master that only the masters may know. His experience cannot be described because it transcends language. It is peace, serenity, power, victory, Self-realization.

He comes to know God. That goodness to

which he consecrated himself, that becomes a creative power within him, that flows in beauty through his life, is not some blind, vague, impalpable force like magnetism, or gravitation, or electricity. It is vital, life itself. It is God. He enters into communion. He enjoys a tender filial relationship. He experiences companionship with God. Here again language fails. The boor cannot know the inspiration of the artist, the coward cannot understand the hero, the sensualist cannot appreciate pure love, neither can the carnal mind understand the spiritual life. It must be experienced to be understood.

THE BIBLE

The Bible has been a battleground for twenty centuries and the fact that this library of wonderful books has survived the shock of the conflict is conclusive proof of its intrinsic worth.

In the early Christian centuries it was the object of attack by the pagan philosophers and dialecticians and the attacks of modern atheists are peurile as compared with the brilliant onslaughts of the Roman Celsus.

For fifteen centuries the schoolmen made the Bible an arsenal and armory and from its texts weapons were formed and ammunition wrought to defend orthodoxy and put down heresy. The heretics returned the compliment and met text with text, scriptural argument with scriptural argument. This kind of warfare was indulged in even down to the last century and many people remember the old fashioned doctrinal debates when the debaters tried to down each other by marshalling "proof texts"; and very ingenious some of the interpretations were, too.

More recently the so-called "higher critics" have had their innings, and every verse and word has been subjected to the closest scrutiny.

Once more the valiant defenders of the faith, the believers in the inerrantcy of the scriptures, fought earnestly over its pages.

The Bible has been made to defend nearly every sin and crime the race has known. The divine right of kings, slavery, human sacrifice, polygamy, intemperance, war, idolatry, ecclesiastical despotism, inquisitorial cruelty, and every other wrong and vice has been upheld by texts drawn from the scriptures.

No other book has been so abused, misrepresented and maligned.

But in spite of overzealous friend, aggressive foe, unscrupulous partisan and cruel bigot the Bible has endured and today holds a higher place in the hearts and minds of thinking people than ever before.

To determine the rightful place of the Bible in the life and thought of the modern man it is necessary to know just what the Bible is.

The Bible is a library of national literature, covering a period of over two thousand years, and includes history, poetry, drama, aphorisms, churchly polity and ritual, legislative enactments, and sermons. Its authors were kings and peasants, merchants and priests, statesmen and literary men.

What gives it its unique religious value? It is the literature recording the intellectual, moral and spiritual development of a race

that gave itself to follow after righteousness as the Greek nation gave itself to beauty, as the American nation gives itself to industry and commerce. When our young people wish to study art we place before them the Greek ideals of beauty. When our young men wish to learn war we place in their hands the literature of the war-like nations. When we wish to know the best that man has discovered in religious experience or that God has revealed to man we go to the literature of the Hebrew nation, the nation that for many centuries devoted itself to the work of developing the religious consciousness.

Not that all parts of this literature are of equal value. This is where our fathers made the fatal mistake. The misconception that it was one book, all parts of which were equally valuable as a guide to faith and conduct, gave plausibility to the violent assaults upon the morality of the Bible.

The Bible represents the evolution of the moral perception and understanding of this remarkable nation.

There is infinite distance between Jael driving the nail of base treachery through the forehead of Sisera and the exhortation "Love your enemies"; or between Joshua slaying young and old, women and children in the name of the Lord and "Father, forgive them"; or be-

tween the cursing Psalms and Paul's great hymn of love.

The Bible must be read with intelligence and discrimination. It is poor business to read the Bible in a hit or miss, haphazard way or to try the doubtful experiment of reading the Bible through by reading a chapter a day.

The average man is content to let the schoolmen have a monopoly of the debate concerning theology, and let them do the best or the worst they can with the doctrinal problems of the depravity of man, the subtle distinctions of the trinity, and the tremendous doctrines of eschatology.

He is also willing to leave to the higher critics the task of determining authorships and dates, and settling other disputes of a purely literary nature.

He skips, as unprofitable reading, the genealogies, the imprecatory Psalms, the bloody and sickening exploits of half-barbarous generals, the elaborate ceremonies of the Levitical ritual, and most of the prophecies; and turns to the great, direct, simple spiritual scriptures, such as certain of the Psalms, passages from the prophets, the sermon on the mount and other records of the words and life of Jesus, and the inspired writings of Paul and the other apostles; and therein finds moral stimulus and spiritual inspiration.

The reading of the Bible, in this way, brings wisdom and understanding. This literature, articulating the yearnings of devout souls and expressing the illumined hours of seers and prophets, saints and sages, becomes a real revelation of God's spirit and will. It quickens and enlightens.

Dwight L. Moody once said that he knew the Bible was inspired because it inspired him. And the modern man studying the Bible in this direct and simple way has the same experience. Thus the Bible becomes in deed and in truth the bread of life.

No one can study the inspired writings in this spirit without coming to understand a deeper truth.

God spoke to Moses, Isaiah and Paul, it is true. They who sat spell-bound while the Master expounded the spiritual verities, listened to divine words and felt the thrill of a divine personality. But God's contact with and revelation to man are not limited to the Hebrew nation, nor to men and women who lived twenty centuries ago. He speaks, he inspires today here and now, just as certainly as he spoke to David and John. The canon of the scriptures has never been closed.

The devout soul will draw inspiration from the sacred pages and rejoice in the revelations given to holy souls in ages past; and at the

same time will expect and receive the interior revelation, at first hand, of the goodness and love of God.

Thus we reach on this as on every other subject, the essential religious truth, that religion is a personal matter, an individual realization, that to be known must be experienced. Religion is not a belief, a theory or a doctrine, it is life.

The religious experience of the present hour illumines the experiences recorded in the ancient scriptures. They act and interact, each confirming and vitalizing the other; and we learn at last to accept inspiration wherever found in writings ancient or modern, sacred or profane, knowing that whatever inspires men and women to purer-thinking, nobler-acting, comes from God and is therefore worthy of full acceptance.

PRAYER

Religion without prayer is unthinkable. We find religious worship without sermons, without hymns, without priests, without sacred writings, but never a religion without prayer.

There is a prevalent belief that modern science has made prayer absurd. Science, having demonstrated the universal reign of law, is therefore supposed to have demonstrated the futility of prayer.

The trouble is not with science or with true prayer, but with our petty, selfish, narrow ideas of prayer.

To many of us prayer is simply asking God for things, a cataloging of wants and needs, a request to be relieved of duties and responsibilities, an attempt to evade the just consequences of our follies and sins, or an effort to obtain by flattery special divine concessions. Such prayers are childish and selfish.

To others, prayer is a kind of sacred magic by which the prayer hopes to ward off danger and evil. He is moved by the spirit of the little urchin who confided awesomely to his chum, "I didn't pray last night. I ain't going to pray tonight nor tomorrow night and

if nothing don't happen I ain't never goin' to pray no more."

Many of our prayers are obviously ridiculous, as, when for instance we ask the abrogation of the eternal laws to serve a petty personal purpose. He was a wise old preacher who stood at the door of his church and met the congregation gathered to pray for rain with the command, "Go home. There is no use praying for rain today. The wind is in the wrong direction."

Experience proves that God will not do for us what we ought to do for ourselves. If you want the harvest, you must sow the seed. If you want bodily vigor, you must obey the laws of health. If you want knowledge and wisdom, you must sit at the feet of the teacher and learn. If you want the Isthmus of Panama pierced, you must dig the canal. If you want yellow fever banished, you must seek and find its cause and then clean the swamps of the mosquito. God never caters to the lazy man.

Experience proves that prayer cannot be used as a cheap and easy way of evading the results of wrong doing. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." This law is written deep in the being of man.

"The moving finger writes and having writ
Moves on, nor all thy piety nor wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,
Nor all thy tears wash out a word of it."

There is a prayer possible that is at once rational, scientific and deeply religious.

Prayer, rightly understood, is the earnest desire of the soul to serve goodness, to live in accordance with divine law, and worthily to fulfill the mission of the individual life. It is an effort "to contemplate the facts of life from the highest point of view," "to see the thing as it stands in God," and having seen the highest and noblest, willingly and gladly to bring all the aims and impulses of the life into harmony with it.

Prayer is meditation. "Let us be silent,—so we may hear the whisper of the gods," exhorted Emerson. Our new thought friends call it "entering the silence." Our orthodox friends call it "secret prayer." It is the spirit of Samuel saying, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Clearing from the mind the confusion and perplexities of the day we give our thoughts to dwell on the best, the purest, the most exalted things we know. We throw open our souls to receive good thoughts, good impulses, good visions. In response to our invitation they come crowding in.

Aspiration naturally follows. Freed from selfish desires and contemplating life's highest good, the soul eagerly seeks to possess not some good but all good, and will be satisfied with nothing less.

From the high vantage point we look upon the facts, the problems, the duties of our everyday life, and lo the way that seemed so devious and dark is flooded with light; the problem that baffled our keenest thought presents within itself its own solution; the hard experience that embittered us discloses a deep significance and beauty we had not known; the responsibility that crushed us to the earth becomes lightened. We are enabled to "take the separate look" and if necessary gaze serene upon "our own crucifixion and bloody crowning." In the desire to know good and good alone, life as a whole takes on a new and splendid meaning.

We develop an inner sense which is insight, perception, wisdom. Life reveals itself at all points as reasonable, purposeful, loving; not broken and separated but whole and orderly. We are permitted to view the right side of the tapestry we are weaving and although to our outward eyes the web is tangled and the design is botched, the inner sight perceives the perfect work in process of fulfillment.

Knowing that a divine destiny is being wrought out in our life we learn the lesson of self-surrender that we may attain to Self-realization. Perceiving God's will for us, we joyfully bring our plans and purposes into harmony.

"Our wills are ours, we know not how,
Our will are ours, to make them thine."

Soon we offer the prayer of consecration, "not my will but thine be done."

We are not far from the sublime revelation now. Communion with God is no longer an empty phrase. It is a vital experience. As in all high experiences words fail to describe and this experience must be lived to be known. Fellowship with God, loving companionship with the Father, becomes a real, a hourly experience.

> "Speak to him, thou, for he hears,
> And spirit with spirit may meet,
> Closer is he than breathing,
> Nearer than hands and feet."

Prayer of this kind brings us into harmony with the eternal laws, and puts us into the center of the irresistible torrent of creative power, makes us know that throughout the whole, palpitating universe there is nothing but goodness, life and love.

Life becomes illumined. The work properly ours comes to our hand and the strength to do it. The way we should tread shines before us like a pathway of light. Where before we groped and stumbled we now stride forward in the assurance of a great understanding. We become co-workers with God and in the work of our hands do we offer our sincerest worship, and our truest prayer.

JESUS CHRIST

Say what you will, believe what you will about Jesus of Nazareth,—hail him God incarnate, acknowledge him the ideal man or recognize him as a great teacher,—you must admit that he is the most remarkable, the most fascinating, the most significant figure in history. The song of the angels over his manger-cradle ushered in a new era. The tides of history sweep around that lonely cross on Calvary, and the glory shining from that spotless life floods all succeeding ages with light whose increasing splendor gives assurance of that long looked for day when hope and peace and love shall fill the earth with beauty and with joy.

The pomp and circumstance of imperial rulers are tawdry compared with the mystic diadem of triumphant manhood that crowns his brow. Each succeeding generation brings the tribute of its affection and loving hands entwine his cross with fadeless lilies.

I will admit I am not greatly interested in the theological Christ, the Christ of the creeds, the Christ of involved and bewildering metaphysics, the Christ of speculation, the Christ of miracles.

I love to sit at his feet as a teacher. It is true the cardinal principles of his teachings were age-old even when he uttered his golden words, but he caught up the popular religious ideas of his time and gave them a new, a spiritual meaning. The Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, the kingdom of heaven, the divinity of the human soul, translated by his tongue, transmuted in the greatness and glory of his sublime personality, took on a significance they never had before.

His moral precepts are universal and common to all religions, but his ethics was new. The ancient teachers based their morality on authority, duty, self-interest, patriotism. Jesus based his on love. Whenever cynic or earnest seeker questioned him concerning the seat of moral authority he always answered "thou shalt love." Judged by the teachings of Jesus, the spirit, the morality, the doctrines, the gospel of Christianity are all summed up in the one word "love."

I delight to think of him as a man among men. So much has been said about the unique deity of Jesus that his humanity has been obscured. Yet it is apparent that if he was divine in a unique sense, we could know nothing of that part of his nature. We can know only that part that we hold in common. I stand abashed before his resplendent manhood,

ashamed of my own littleness. Yet I rejoice as I behold him, knowing that the divinity that made his life glorious and triumphant resides in me also. I believe most heartily in the divinity of Jesus.

I believe in the idealized Christ. By universal consent, all the ideals and aspirations of our occidental world cluster around his name. In view of this fact the mere historicity of Jesus is of minor importance. Even though future investigations might throw doubt upon certain recorded incidents of his life, yes, even though the whole story of Jesus should be proven a myth, the ideal of the Christ as held by devout souls of every creed would remain. And that ideal would stimulate to splendid moral endeavor and spiritual achievement.

Jesus is the most potent spiritual force in the world today because he was the world's greatest lover. This was the secret of his mighty power over men when he walked the earth; and accounts for his command over the hearts of men today. Herein he differed from other great teachers. They gave precepts and philosophy. He gave a life. They said "Be good"; he showed in himself that goodness was defined only in terms of love. He did not merely say "love," he demonstrated the power of the love life.

It is most regrettable that the meaning of the

life and work of Jesus should have been so obscured by theologians and preachers. The elaborate schemes of salvation, the involved and confusing doctrines of the atonement, have hopelessly bewildered the lay mind. Yet all the sects agree in affirming the fundamental principle that he came to reveal the heart of God, that by his teachings, his life, his death and resurrection he demonstrated that God is love, and he became the savior of the world because he loved. Herein we can all agree. Why wrangle about the metaphysics of the subject, when we all agree upon the real heart of the matter?

The church has spent too much time debating about the person, the work, the nature of Jesus. Its gaze has been riveted on Palestine and the events that there took place. There is a great truth that by comparison makes all speculation look childish. It is the fulfillment of the promise "Lo I am with you alway."

Christ is more certainly present today than he ever was in ancient Judea. He moves among men. He throbs in the hearts of men, in the heart of every man. To become conscious of this fact is to live, spiritually. This was the text of every sermon Paul preached. "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." "For me to live is Christ." This is foolishness to the worldly-minded. To the awakened and illumined soul Christ is a real, a living presence.

This experience is not a dreamy mysticism. It is intensely practical. It dominates the life. It is useless to sing songs about Jesus unless we follow him. It is useless to adore him unless we emulate him. It is useless to bear his name unless we partake of his spirit. It is useless to worship Jesus unless the sense of our own divinity is thereby strengthened. It is useless to believe that God was in Jesus unless we feel God within ourselves. It is useless to profess belief in the resurrection unless Christ be risen in us.

He is a Christian who in earnestness seeks to manifest the Christ-spirit of trust and love, who lets his life flow out in sympathy and service, who gives himself to realize his own divinity and comes at length to know the blessedness of the experience, known by Jesus and promised to his disciples, "I and my Father are one."

Absolute Knowledge is
the Father of true love no
Man can love truly until
he knows of something To love
he cannot truly love a moreutly

HELL AND HEAVEN

I believe in hell.

Of course, I do not believe in the old fashioned hell of fire and brimstone. The best thought of the day has thrown aside the belief in an eternity of torture and agony.

The doctrine of eternal pain is inconsistent with any belief in the justice, mercy, goodness or wisdom of God. An eternity of agony is too severe a punishment for even a life time of sin, when the frailty, the ignorance, the innate folly of man are remembered. How can we reconcile the goodness of God with a theology that holds that man is born cursed with the sin of Adam, predisposed to evil, naturally depraved, and yet is damned to unending misery because thus handicapped he does not heed the exhortation of an evangelist and become a righteous man? What wisdom can there be in the creation of unnumbered millions of men and women, when, according to the popular theology, the vast majority of them must stumble and grope through life to fall at last into the eternal flames? The whole doctrine would be grotesque, were it not shocking. Thomas Paine spoke a worthy sentiment

when he said, "Any system of religion that shocks the mind of a child cannot be a true system."

We know that the threat of hell fire does not serve to coerce people to be good. We have learned that morality born of fear is of doubtful quality; consequently church-going and devotion are no longer mere premiums on post-mortem fire insurance.

I cannot believe that a wise and loving creator will allow one of his children to be lost in the eternal dark. His children may wander far from him in devious paths of sin and perversity, but through many lives his love will follow them, yearning and agonizing and will not cease until the last sin-sick, weary child staggers back to the Father's heart, to be enfolded in the Father's love.

That may be rank heresy, but I shall cling tenaciously to that belief and shall appeal from dogma and priest to Jesus who revealed the love of the Father in those two marvelous parables of the ninety and nine and the prodigal son.

Yet I believe in hells, personal and social.

In our folly and sin we are making hells for ourselves. The hell that burns in the bosom, created by an outraged conscience and fanned by perversity, is more terrible than any fanciful theological hell. Dimmesdale at the foot of

the gallows, Lady Macbeth washing the blood from her hand, Tito, terror-stricken, looking into the face of the benefactor he had basely betrayed, suffered agonies that make the theological hells look childish.

Old Omar had it right when he declared:

"I sent my soul through the invisible,
One letter of that after-life to spell
And by-and-by my soul returned to me
And answered, 'I myself am heaven and hell.' "

We are making social hells also. We do not need to search religious literature to find descriptions of hell. What are war, sweat-shops, child labor conditions, prisons, red light districts, the white plague but hells, terrible and awful? God did not make them. They were made and are maintained by human greed, hate and folly.

And how shall we escape these hells, personal and social? There is but one answer, quit making them.

But I would rather talk about heaven.

Is there a distant magical city of golden streets, where choiring angels make eternal music? I don't know, and really I am not very much interested. It is not a very attractive heaven to most people. Many of us are like the good man who had been urged by a friend to give his opinion about the possibility

of life after death, and replied, petulantly, "Of course, if you press me, I believe we shall all enter into eternal bliss, but I really wish you wouldn't talk about such disagreeable subjects."

I do know that we do not have to die to go to heaven, if by heaven you mean a condition of peace, serenity and spiritual realization. I object to postponing my heaven. Heaven beyond the grave is a rather uncertain proposition. Heaven realized now is real and substantial.

Just as by folly and sin we create our own hells, so by love and sympathy we create our own heavens and maintain them by purity and devotion.

This inner realization has a subtle and yet powerful effect upon our outer circumstances, until the ugliest of environments may be made beautiful. Good old Father Taylor had the right idea. When he was chided for his friendship with the pure-spirited Emerson and reminded that Emerson, for his heresies, would go to hell, replied, "that may be, but if Waldo Emerson goes to hell, there will be an instant change in the climate and immigration will soon set in that way."

What makes heaven? Love? Adoration of the highest, as illustrated by "the glory song?" Reward for good deeds? Opportuni-

ties for nobler service? Opportunities of self-development and self-expression? Realization of the presence of God?

Why, you can have all that now!

A child when asked, "where is heaven?" answered, "Heaven is where God is." And that answer was correct.

God is as certainly present here and now as he ever will be in any distant future or in any place or condition. Know this as a vital experience and you have attained heaven.

"Alone, O Love Ineffable,
Thy saving name is given,
To turn aside from thee is hell,
To walk with thee is heaven."

IMMORTALITY

Ever since the naked savage knelt in anguish over the lifeless body of his mate and gazed into the mystery of death, the question of a future life has been of transcendent interest to man, and it will continue to engage his profoundest thought and most insistent investigation until the veil has been lifted and life beyond death is revealed to human knowledge.

We may gain an ever-increasing control over nature, may extend man's power beyond his wildest dreams, may make mundane life beautiful and luxurious, but as long as the problem of death remains unsolved, man will feel himself poor and weak.

The human heart demands immortality and will be satisfied with nothing less. Man refuses to believe that the powers and possibilities of his life and soul are narrowed to the petty limits of birth and death. In his best moments he feels within him something that declares itself superior to material limitations, uncircumscribed by time and space, holding allegiance to truth greater than that revealed by sense and logic, that laughs at dissolution and knows itself one with eternity.

He clings tenaciously to his belief in the veracity of such experiences despite all argument and ridicule. So he smothers with living flowers the caskets of his sacred dead, carves words of hope upon the tombstone, and in the night of black bereavement lifts his tear-dimmed eyes to see the shining of the stars.

The best and purest souls the race has known have proclaimed the doctrine of immortality. Krishna, Socrates, Jesus, Zoroaster, Victor Hugo, Emerson, all bear witness to this truth, confirming our own intuitions.

We believe in the conservation of energy and the indestructibility of matter, why not also, the conservation of consciousness and the immutability of the human spirit?

Yet I have no desire to present an argument to prove future existence. I fear that after all the logic and all the reason we have only proven the possibility of life beyond death, only presented intimations of immortality.

The belief in immortal life must rest upon a deeper foundation.

We have invested death with undue importance. We have made the fear of death the central thought in our religion, and preparation for death has been made the main purpose of life. We have clothed death with mystery and terror and the shadows of the grave we have peopled with spectres of fear.

The scientist looking at death impersonally and dispassionately finds it natural and inevitable and therefore as reasonable and purposeful as birth. In fact, he sees it as one of the beautiful processes of ever renewing life. The modern man must take this scientific truth, spiritualize it and make it part of his thought and life.

The trouble is that men usually cannot think of themselves as anything but body; as a consequence when the body dies they say, "he is dead." This is a grievous error. The body is only a garment that the soul wears, and when its usefulness is past it is thrown aside like last year's coat. If we would only train ourselves to think of ourselves as immortal spirits, immortality would soon reveal itself to us.

What is immortality?

It is not mere extension of existence. It is not merely some life beyond the grave. It is something far grander.

Immortality, as I understand it, is the increasing realization of life, of innate spiritual capacity, of the deepest self, of righteousness and love. It is a man's identification of himself with the cosmic life; the knowledge that essentially he is one with the eternal goodness and love. It is the realization, conscious, vital, that he is spirit, and cannot be affected by the vicissitudes of time or touched by death. It is to know that:

"Never the spirit was born, the spirit shall cease
to be never,
Never was time it was not, end and beginning
are dreams,
Birthless and deathless and changeless re-
maineth the spirit forever,
Death hath not touched it at all, dead though
the house of it seems."

He who attains this consciousness is blest in a threefold way.

When death visits the circle of his loved ones he does not mourn with heart-breaking bereavement. Over the mists of his tears is thrown the rainbow of hope. The darkness of the hour is lightened with the knowledge that the spirit of the loved one has gone on from glory unto glory toward the fulness of divine and radiant life. Death is but the sombre gateway through which the loved one has passed to the greater life beyond.

Death is robbed of its terrors. It is no longer an enemy to be hated and feared. It is recognized as a messenger from the Father's heart bearing a command to come up higher. It is a deliverer coming to emancipate the soul from the fetters of the flesh. He greets death with a song of exultation. He conquers death by tearing off the mask of mystery and darkness and disclosing the face of love.

He comes at length to know the greater truth. The realization of immortality does not

wait for its fulfillment for some existence beyond the grave but may be known and enjoyed here and now. The hero-souls of the race have walked through life with triumphant step and greeted death with laughter and with jest, because they had entered into this experience of truth and reality even while subject to the limitations of sense. This consciousness comes to the man who consecrates himself to live like an immortal. Emerson worthily sums up the matter: "Higher than the question of our duration is the question of our deserving. Immortality will come to such as are ready for it, and he who would be a great soul in the future must be a great soul now."

THE DEVIL

There is only one devil in the universe and that is fear. Abolish fear from the human heart and a belief in the devil dies.

The first religion was devil worship and the savage offered his gifts to avert the wrath of the demons. To him every tree hid an enemy and every shadow concealed a foe. He lived in an atmosphere of fear and was a firm believer in devils.

Fear has been the main stock in trade of religious charlatans in all ages. The voodoo man with his black magic, the medicine man with his tom-tom, the pagan priest with his incantations and oracles, the Christian minister with his threat of hell and the devil, are all directing their appeal to the cowardly fear in the hearts of their credulous and superstitious followers.

The belief in the existence of a principle of evil, either personified or otherwise, disappears before the advance of knowledge. Our fathers believed that old women could enter into a compact with Satan and so they drowned the witches. But we laugh at their delusion. They cowered before the lightning as a malevolent

X The devil is a liar and Demonstrator of Evil

energy, but we harness it and make it turn the wheels of our factories and light our streets. A few years ago religious processions passed through the streets of New Orleans and Havana in an effort to exorcise the yellow fever devil, but we simply killed off the mosquito that carried the yellow fever germ and that put that particular kind of devil out of business.

Modern science has proven that there is no malignant power, energy or agency in the universe. Every force has a definite and worthy work to perform. Every atom contributes its part to the great cosmic scheme. Science has stolen the mystery from nature and revealed the workings of beautiful, living laws. It has robbed the tempest of its terrors and we stand awed at the passing of omnipotence. Science has driven the hobgoblins from hillside and meadow and clothed all nature with beauty and with joy. Science has taken the forces that to the imaginations of our fathers were the messengers of wrath and malevolence and has made them docile servants of man. Science has demonstrated that every atom is a point of intelligence and is instinct with divinity.

There is no room in the universe for a devil, save in the superstitious fears of man.

Philosophy confirms the findings of science with the inquiry, "If God be all there is and

there is naught beside him, where can there be found a devil?"

Supposing for the sake of argument we admit that there is a devil, a personified principle of evil; how much harm can he do you? Go, read once more the dramatic story of Job, and you shall find that he cannot touch the real You unless you give consent. He may take your health, but he cannot make you blaspheme. He may take your possessions, but he cannot rob you of your integrity, your good conscience. He may take your reputation, but he cannot injure your character. He may frustrate your plans, but he cannot disturb the serenity of your soul. He may kill your body, but he cannot touch your immortal soul. Give him all the power popularly attributed to him and yet he cannot do you any real harm. Then why fear him? Free yourself from fear and you shall find that he is but the figment of your imagination.

The enlightened soul knows that in life, in death, throughout the universe, there is absolutely nothing to fear; and that knowledge, confirmed by everyday experience, puts an end to a belief in the devil.

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL.

Properly speaking there is no problem of evil; because there is no evil.

Nature reveals no miracle, no break, no vacuum, no atom that is not governed by divine law. The universal purpose enfolds every living thing. In some mysterious but certain way the multitudinous universe throbs in response to a cosmic life that discloses itself at all points, perfect, methodical, purposeful, beneficient. In the world of nature there may be pain, there may be strife, there may be death, but the scientist discovers no evil.

In human life the same is true. There are pain, strife and death, and there are folly and sin, but there is nothing essentially evil.

Human life no less than the world of nature is the scene of the operation of divine processes. There is no room for chance or caprice. The events of your life are as divinely ordered as the movements of the heavenly bodies. The difference is this, they being inert masses are helpless under the compulsion of the mighty cosmic forces, while you being intelligent may recognize the workings of the cosmic forces in your life, may understand them and learn their

purpose, and then willingly and joyfully may co-operate with them in the fulfillment of your divine destiny.

The whole problem resolves itself into the question, "Is this a universe or a di-verse?" If this be a di-verse, a battleground where titanic forces strive, with the final result in doubt, nothing matters. Man is simply the helpless puppet tossed hither and thither by influences over which he has no control, to be crushed finally. If it be a universe, an expression of Eternal Goodness,—and this is the only basis for a sane and workable philosophy—evil as an entity, an essentially bad force or agency is an absurdity. Job's question, propounded millenniums ago, remains unanswered. "If it be not he, who, then is it?" (Job 9:24 R. V.) The prophet had the courage of his logic when he declared, "I am the Lord and there is none else. I form the light and create darkness: I make peace and I create evil." (Isaiah 45:7).

Can Eternal Goodness create anything essentially evil?

What, then, are these influences, forces, agencies, events and experiences that by popular consent we call evil? How shall we escape from them?

There is only one way of escape and that is by a recognition of the true nature of these so-called evil things. Our little ones are frightened

by the jack-in-the-box until we explain the harmless toy. So with evil.

The prophetic antithesis is clear and explains itself. What darkness is to light, evil is to goodness. The presence of light proves the nothingness of darkness. Goodness demonstrates the nothingness of evil.

Evil is negation, the absence of truth. Mephistopheles is always "the spirit that denies." Evil is darkness, limitation, ignorance, delusion. Declare the truth and the denying spirit vanishes. Power voids limitation. Wisdom dissipates ignorance. Realization, the coming to one's self, awakens from delusion. Evil belongs to dream life; goodness to the soul awake.

This is the meaning of the Master's command "Resist not evil." This is the reason why we should "judge not." This is the philosophy underlying the exhortation "Love your enemies."

Much that we call evil is one of three things: misunderstood facts and events, misdirected energy or good in the making.

Cholera epidemics were called evil, but now that we understand the laws of sanitation we have no more plagues. Cyclones and earthquakes were thought to be the visitations of divine wrath, but we know now they have no moral significance; they are purely natural phenomena. An eclipse set the world in a panic

but we now watch imperturbed the passing of the celestial bodies. As we come to understand that all natural phenomena are the result of the operation of natural forces acting in an orderly fashion our superstitious fears vanish.

What we call sin is often misdirected energy. Lightning strikes your house and sets it on fire. Lightning controlled and directed lights and heats your home. In one case it is a bane, in the other a blessing. There is not a passion or an impulse that is vicious of itself. Every vice is a perverted virtue. Envy is emulation gone wrong. Bigotry is self-reliance gone wrong. Cowardice is prudence gone wrong. Sexual perversity is the sexual instinct gone wrong.

Whether a thought or action can be called sinful or not depends upon the circumstances. Sin is but the choice of the lower in the presence of the higher. "It was my duty to have loved the highest," wailed the queen in the hour of her remorse.

What we call evil is frequently good in the making. The luscious peach was originally a poisonous almond. Burbank, the wizard, searches out the sports and freaks of nature and from them produces new flowers, new fruits. Evolution will make the good of today the evil of tomorrow, and the evil experiences of today will produce the good of tomorrow. The

prodigal son had to go down to the pigstye to "come to himself." Even the great Nazarene had to pass through the desert of bitter temptation. From the pains and sorrows, the disappointments and hard experiences of our lives a master hand is working out something good; and the final good justifies the process. Think you not the clay suffers under the hand of the potter?

History and the modern "success" literature are full of the examples of men and women who have met their untoward circumstances and made of them stairs on which to rise to glory and to power. From Paul with his "thorn" to Fanny Crosby and Helen Keller, they all teach the same lesson. Every evil that afflicts us may be enlarged to assist us heavenward.

The problems of life are no more evil than are the problems of the school room. We know the tasks of the schoolroom must be mastered if the mind is to be developed. So the problems of life must be mastered that the soul may come to its own.

The adversities of life come to us straight from the Father's heart, freighted with love. They buffet the soul, but if we meet them courageously they develop moral muscle and spiritual strength. Life is a boxing match where every one must put on the gloves and prove of what stuff he is made; and always his adversary is God.

As soon as you realize that God is at the heart of every trial or distressing experience you will quit fighting and when you surrender you win the victory. Jacob fought all night with the angel, but when he stopped struggling he arose "a prince of God."

Quit thinking about evil. Quit looking for it. Quit making it in your own life by unworthy thoughts and actions. Quit fighting with your evil habits or limiting circumstances. Surrender whole-heartedly to God, to goodness, truth and love. Let them fill your heart and mind; then you shall rise into life, and in the realization of life, abundant, radiant, divine, you shall come to see and know that the universe, mankind, and your own soul can know no evil, physical, mental, moral, but that all is goodness, love and God.

In this realization shall perfect love, truth and health be fulfilled in you.

THE CHURCH

Looking back over history the Christian church shows itself in many aspects. At times it shows itself a mighty ecclesiastical system, in league with aristocracy, despotic, dogmatic, oppressive. Again it shows itself a theological propaganda, striving to establish creeds and rituals, battling fiercely for the maintenance of the church's authority over faith and reason. Again it shows itself as an emotional crusade, and Christendom is shaken with religious revivals.

But modern progress has well-nigh destroyed the church. The churches are being abolished, not by legislative enactment or direct attack, but by popular neglect. They do not seem to have either the vitality or the ability to adapt themselves to the needs of the new time. Every great denomination, excepting the Christian Science church, in recent official utterances has complained of declining membership, vacant pulpits and vanishing influence.

Democracy makes an ecclesiastical aristocracy impossible. Widespread education has dissipated superstition. Science has made the ancient theology ridiculous. Modern psychol-

ogy condemns the emotional extravagances of the old fashioned revival. The emancipating, liberalizing influences of modern thought are honey-combing the narrow orthodoxies. The world of today cares nothing for sectarianism, doctrinal hair-splitting or bigotry.

Is the church, then, doomed?

No.

Man is incurably religious, and men will always group themselves in religious organizations for worship, self-development, propaganda, and mutual service.

Every existing church is needed and will be needed for many decades to come. Temperament, education, mental bent, and propinquity will determine very largely whether a man is to be a Roman Catholic, a Methodist, a Quaker, or a "holy roller." Every church contains much more good than evil or it could not exist at all.

But the new church that shall command the future is being born.

It is not a separate institution with ministers, ritual, organization.

The church of the future is now developing within society, and its potent influence is felt in education, politics, commerce, industry, literature, everywhere. Its members profess no common creed, speak no common shibboleth. They are known by their spirit, not by their professions or badges.

They are known by their profound spirituality. They see the deeper meanings of life. They perceive the more significant tendencies of modern progress. They discern the eternal spirit of truth and love working out a divine purpose in human affairs. God is real to them as principle, goodness, truth, love, and they see and feel him everywhere. They truly live in the presence of the Most High.

The members of this church acknowledge no churchly authority, many of them do not even maintain a formal allegiance to the ancient forms. They preach individual responsibility on all occasions and place conscience on the seat of judgment as superior to traditions and creeds.

United in spirit and not in outward organization, scattered throughout all existing churches, they are wondrously tolerant. They know that mere allegiance to a creed does not make a man good, nor does a rejection of all the creeds necessarily make a man bad. They pierce the superficiality of custom and respectability and judge a man by his character, a church by its influence, a movement by its aim and purpose. If thus tested they ring true, they are accepted.

If they have any badge or grip or token by which they are known it is sympathy; that subtle recognition of mutual purpose, mutual de-

pendence, mutual relationship, mutual obligation, mutual worth that binds men's hearts together.

The most striking characteristic of these members of this twentieth century church is their consecration to the noble ideals of social service. Differing widely in matters of doctrine and ecclesiastical polity, they are united in an earnest desire to uplift humanity, improve social conditions and make this old world a sweeter, cleaner, happier place. And there are some of us who are daring to believe and teach that a humanitarian spirit is of far greater importance than correct theological opinions.

The worship of the new church will not consist of hymn-singing and prayer, but will be the practice of love in all life's relationships. Its creed will not begin "I believe," but " I love"; its exhortation shall be not "Believe thou," but "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind, soul and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself."

Many to whom the former religious phraseology is dear will protest that because the new church is not making such frequent reference to Jesus that therefore it is unchristian. But not so. It is more important to show loyalty to the spirit of the Christ than to profess loyalty to his name. Not every one that saith "Lord, Lord," declared the Master himself. Even

though the new church does not speak his name so frequently, it is saturated with his spirit and animated with the same lofty purpose that gave the glory to his divine life.

The divisions of the church have been the sorrow of devout churchmen in all ages. Church unity is a dream fondly held by the church today, and that dream will be realized some day. But the churches will never unite in the profession of any creed nor in submission to any one central organization or authority.

There is only one practical basis for church unity and that is an earnest effort to exemplify the teachings of Christ, to manifest his spirit in individual and social life, and a consecrated endeavor to establish the Kingdom of God upon the earth. This is the only basis of common interest, the only spirit that shall truly federate discordant Christendom.

As a wise man once said, the church of tomorrow "will be a union of all who love in the service of all who suffer."

Hail the glad day when this divine, this Christlike spirit shall be regnant in the hearts of men.

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